

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

Preserving the Option for a Countywide Special Election in March 2017

The next available election date for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to place potential measures before the voters to address homelessness and other issues is on March 7, 2017. The ideal scenario is for several jurisdictions to combine elections on that date and hold one election, known as a consolidated election, conducted by the County of Los Angeles (County). While ideal, a consolidated election on this date requires significant due diligence, jurisdictional coordination, and advance preparation to ensure success. The last scheduled meeting that the Board could vote to order a special election for March 2017 is on December 6, 2016. The last day to have a special meeting that the Board could vote to order a special election is only a few days later on December 9, 2016. To administer a successful countywide election, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) cannot wait to begin coordinating until December. Election planning for all jurisdictions begins several months in advance of the December 9, 2016 deadline. As such, coordinating early in an effort to conduct a consolidated election with other cities and districts is critical.

The benefits of a consolidated election are clear. They improve voter clarity, avoid duplication of services, reduce voter fatigue, and serve to ensure a countywide awareness of the election which facilitates and encourages voter participation. There are 36 other jurisdictions – cities and districts, including the City of Los Angeles – that are currently scheduled to conduct their regular municipal elections in March 2017. The vast majority of

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these jurisdictions administer their own elections outside of the purview of the RR/CC. If the County wants to consider calling for a special election and adding a countywide ballot initiative in March 2017, the best course of action would be for other cities and districts to consolidate onto the County's ballot.

Without a consolidated election, cities would conduct their own concurrent election at the same time as the County election, which is not in the best interest of the public. Concurrent elections not only duplicate efforts of elections officials, but also significantly impact voters. Under a concurrent model, a voter could be required to report to two different polling locations, or if they are located at the same polling place the voter must check in at two different tables, sign two different rosters, and vote two different ballots. This creates confusion among voters and poll workers alike, has the potential of disenfranchising voters, and contributes to an overall negative voting experience.

The RR/CC needs adequate time to begin having discussions with the various jurisdictions to ensure the feasibility of consolidation. The RR/CC must start notifying and coordinating with cities and districts and begin expressing the County's intent to conduct a consolidated, countywide election in March. It is also possible that additional cities or districts may want to consider placing local measures on a consolidated ballot if there is a countywide special election being considered.

In addition, early coordination efforts are necessary because each jurisdiction will be required to pass a resolution requesting consolidation and specified elections services that must then be presented to the Board for approval. The deadline for a jurisdiction to request consolidation with the County for the March 2017 election is December 9, 2016.

The final element of a consolidated election in March is the potential budgetary impacts. The RR/CC estimates that if the County agreed to conduct a consolidated election with every city and district in March 2017, it would cost the County approximately \$10.5 million plus \$8.5 million distributed on a pro rata basis to the participating cities and districts. These estimates assume that the Board moves forward with calling a special election in March 2017. If the Board decides not to proceed with a County measure at that time, then

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the estimated election costs to be distributed among the participating cities and districts will increase to an estimated \$13 million.

If the County does not place a County measure on the ballot in March, the potential increased cost to cities and districts is problematic. These jurisdictions have limited funding, rely on stable estimates of election costs, and have budgeted accordingly. For this reason, it is important for the County to explore a budget-neutral provision for cities in the event that a countywide measure does not move forward and the RR/CC conducts the election for the participating cities and districts. This will require discussions and agreements with each city and district to determine their estimated election costs. In this way, the County can ensure that the individual city or district can present accurate estimates to their governing bodies in the event that the Board decides not to proceed with a countywide ballot measure in March 2017.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Registrar Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) to contact and coordinate with the appropriate jurisdictions (cities and districts) to facilitate a countywide consolidated special election in March 2017 and report back in 30 days on the status of that coordination, identifying any further issues or actions necessary for the Board's action; and
2. Direct the CEO, in coordination with the RR/CC, to identify and allocate the resources to conduct the special election and the associated agreements with the jurisdictions for proportional costs of a special countywide election or the direct costs of conducting the elections absent a countywide measure that is cost-neutral for the jurisdictions.

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(YV/DW)